

# 61 Mech Monthly

61 Mech Veterans Association

# 61 Meg Maandeliks

61 Meg Veterane Vereniging



## January 2024



*50TH Anniversary Of The Birth  
Of The Ratel 1CV*

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*Alle 61 Meg lede word hartlik uitgenooi om toepaslike artikels in te stuur vir publikasie in hierdie maandblad.  
Kom ons hou saam hierdie publikasie lewendig.*

*All 61 Mech members are cordially invited to submit relevant articles for publication in this monthly magazine.  
Let's together keep this publication alive.*

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# JANUARY 2024 ON THE 61 MECH VETERANS FRONT

## JANUARIE 2024 OP DIE 61 MEG VETERANE FRONT

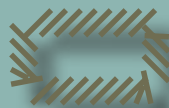
### PARADISE BEACH EASTERN CAPE

Bikerkerk: Hulle het hul eie plek gebou en hou gereeld dienste en word ook gebruik vir mil parades en herdenkings. 21 Januarie



*Andre Herselman*

Pastoor Pottie dra sy 61 wapen met trots. Hy was van Bravo Komp 1987.



*61 RIDERS*

*21 January*

Toffie Grové and Kevin West and at Adler's Heidelberg Tap and Grill.



## SKOUERSKUIR IN GEORGE - 20 JANUARY



Genl Roland de Vries spit die eerste sooi uit vir die oprigting van die gedenkmuur.





It has been 40 years – a lifetime has passed!

It feels like yesterday when we as soldiers of the 61 Mechanized Battalion Group fought bravely together during Operation Askari in the months of December 1983 to January 1984.

Today I would like to honour our brothers who paid the highest price. “Their names liveth for evermore” is an inscription one sees on many war memorials, and it is true, as long as those of us who came back, their families and their descendants, remember to tell the tale of those far-off but vividly remembered days. So let the roll be called once more, with each name answered on behalf of those whose voices were silenced forever.

# **OPERATION ASKARI**

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## **40 YEARS**

**December 1983 - January 1984**

No matter the skill of those involved, the fury of combat will always claim its casualties. These are the men who fell during combat in Operation Askari in the service of their country, they will not be forgotten.

<b>Number</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
79526935BT	Lieutenant K Claasen	18 Dec, 1983
74217076PE	Sergeant HA Oosthuyse	18 Dec, 1983
79364600BG	Rifleman LJ Van Rensburg	18 Dec, 1983
83890970SWK	Rifleman A Kamunga	18 Dec, 1983
83890418SWK	Rifleman E Mashika	18 Dec, 1983
77414357BT	Rifleman GC Schönborn	21 Dec, 1983
82475815BG	Trooper NW Niemand	28 Dec, 1983
81065039BG	Rifleman S Pretorius	27 Dec, 1983
81312464BG	Rifleman GP Le Roux	31 Dec, 1983
81173254BG	Rifleman DJ Schrönen	31 Dec, 1983
81301293BG	Rifleman MC Smit	31 Dec, 1983
78487782BT	Rifleman JC Fourie	31 Dec, 1983
78373362BG	2 Lieutenant PM Liebenberg	31 Dec, 1983
76901420SP	Corporal A Aurelio	02 Jan, 1984
81251506BG	Rifleman B Geen	04 Jan, 1984
82585233BG	Rifleman HA Heyns	04 Jan, 1984
80238660BG	Rifleman GA Lennox	04 Jan, 1984
80211634BG	Rifleman DA Louw	04 Jan, 1984
80490592BG	Rifleman LF Pearson	04 Jan, 1984
79551099BG	Rifleman PD Pretorius	04 Jan, 1984
80264575BG	Lance Corporal WT Steenkamp	04 Jan, 1984
81285504BG	Rifleman JL Pretorius	04 Jan, 1984
81553596SP	Rifleman J Dala	10 Jan, 1984
80830409SP	Rifleman I Malonga	10 Jan, 1984
81059750BG	Corporal JH Roets	23 Jan, 1984

# 50TH Anniversary Of The Birth Of The Ratel ICV Brig Genl Tony Savides

## INTRODUCTION

Determining the birthdate or anniversary of Ratel is quite complicated. Without going into all the possibilities and the permutations thereof, the following are “red letter dates” in this connection:

**03 December 1973:** The RSA cabinet formally approves the ICV project.

**11 January 1974:** Official recognition of the name Ratel for the new ICV, via an Armscor request to the SADF (CSI) to register the name.

**30 May 1974:** Ratel SS (R20578), the first vehicle to bear the name “Ratel”, runs for the first time. Effectively the start of the real Ratel story. Although Ratel SS remained on the strength of the SADF until after 1993, it was never more than a prototype (XDM) and thus never a serving ICV as such.

**14 June 1974:** Fabrication of the first Ratel Mk1 hull (0001 – R20579) starts at Sandock Austral, Boksburg, followed by 0002 and 0003.

**26 July 1974:** 0001 hull complete. Assembly starts. Ratel 0001 remained at Sandock Austral and was only handed over to the SADF on **13 January 1976** after a being the guinea pig for initial production. It was stored at 4 Vehicle Reserve Park, never allocated to a unit and thus never effectively “in service”. It was eventually handed over to the Museum of Military History as an exhibit where, after a somewhat rocky interim period, it remains to this day.

**30 May 1975:** Ratels 0002 and 0003 (Mk1s) delivered for the so-called “final user evaluation” (Operation Eureka). They are accepted by the evaluation team and are thus, effectively, entering SADF service on this date. Technical tests started on 21 June 1975 and the user evaluation on 23 June 1975. Ratel 0003 was damaged and written off during live fire evaluations. Ratel 0002 survived the evaluations and was upgraded to be the first Mk2 by early 1976. By 31 March 1993 it had been further upgraded to a Mk3 and was still in SADF service. It was the longest serving operational Ratel at the time and its delivery date is thus significant in this context as the first Ratel to enter and remain in SADF service from that date.

**3 October 1975:** The first Ratel ICVs for unit deployment delivered off the production line i.e. Ratel 0004 (for TS training Centre) and Ratels 0005 and 0006 (for the Infantry School).

**16 October 1975:** The next two Ratels for the Infantry School (0007 and 0008) delivered off the production line. Together with 0005 and 0006, they were driven down to the Infantry School in mid-October 1975.





**12 July 1976:** First series production Ratels roll off the production line, starting with Ratels 0011 and 0012.

## DECIDING ON THE BIRTH DATE

The Ratel birth date, as with a human, must surely be the date on which it was delivered (in this case, off the production line). This being so, it must be that the official birth date of Ratel is 30 May 1995, the date on which Ratel 0002 and 0003 were delivered ready for evaluation, with 0002 remaining in service until at least 31 March 1993. Similarly, 30 May 1994 must be accepted as the birth date of Ratel SS, the first ICV to bear the name.

## RATEL 50 COMMEMORATIONS 2024/2025

**11 January 2024:** Official recognition of the “Ratel” as the name of the new ICV of the SADF.

**30 May 2024:** 50th anniversary of the delivery into service of Ratel SS.

**30 May 2025:** 50th anniversary of the Ratel ICV entering SADF/SANDF service with Ratels 0002 and 0003.

If, how and when the 50th anniversary will be celebrated next year will be communicated in due course.



# ***RATEL'S BODY ROLL***

***Brig Genl Tony Savides***



Following recent discussions on Facebook (some totally misplaced and inappropriate) following a Ratel “roll-over” – and the speculation and expert and non-expert opinions about this phenomenon, I consulted with some real experts on the matter and came up with the following. However, this is almost a “how long is a piece of string” type subject, as there could be factors and circumstances at play unique to certain incidents and thus not even discussed or mentioned here.

Here is a somewhat over-analysed discussion on the matter!

## ***FIRSTLY, SOME FACTS***

- The body roll is not an inherent design flaw on the Ratel (see the technical insert below).
- The body roll is indeed a “body” roll more than a suspension system roll (although one could lead to the other).

- While some Ratels seemed more prone to this than others, there is no proof of this (subject to the factors mentioned below).

- Excessive speed was not a “prerequisite” for a rollover – they happened at low speeds (circa 60km/h) and at higher speeds (80km/h and higher)
- There were thankfully few deaths and relatively few serious injuries in rollovers. Person-



nel in the turret were in the most danger.

## *TECHNICAL INSERT*

- It would seem that several of the rollovers actually happened as the Ratel concerned left the road, or after it had done so, rather than on the road itself.

- In most cases the Ratel was recovered and serviceable in a very short time.

- As will be seen below, good training, proper and regular maintenance and sound discipline would almost certainly have prevented most rollovers.

- There were more roll-overs in the old SADF than in the SANDF – but there were also far more Ratels on the roads and many more kilometres covered. Accidents per 1000 km would probably have been far fewer.

- There may obviously have been exceptions to any of the above – as there are no details available of every such event.

From Dr (Capt) Stefan Nell, who knows much more about suspensions and about Ratel than many of us – with lots of experience in both:

“None of the reasons [the “factors” - as given below] is 100% correct. Willem Botha [Original project engineer on the Ratel project] once did a study for us, specifically on this subject, after he had retired. I no longer have the study report but recall the results well:

“The steering and suspension design of the Ratel results in a phenomenon called bump steer. This entails that the vertical movement of the front suspension results in a turning of the steering wheel. Who cannot forget how the steering wheel hits your thumbs when driving over rough terrain – drivers were taught during training to hold their thumbs on the side of the steering wheel. The reason for this occurrence was the position of the steering box and steering links below the driver. When bump steer occurs at high speed, the driver over-corrects and the vehicle gets into a swaying (rather than a rolling) motion, with more overcorrecting the vehicle will roll over.”



Obviously, this is a sound technical argument. However, not all such incidents occurred at high speeds; so there must also be other factors at play. What follows is the view of some of us less-technically-inclined Ratel buffs based on years of experience.

### ***TYPICAL BODY ROLL SEQUENCE***

- (Due to the technical reasons given above) the first indication could be the steering wheel rotating, giving the impression that the front wheels are turning – so the driver tries to correct this.
- Due to any of the factors mentioned above and below, the driver senses that the body is starting to sway. This is worse when the driver is concentrating more on the road close to nose of the vehicle than the road some distance ahead.
- The movement of the hull is often what the driver feels but he is not aware of this.
- The driver doesn't know that in most cases the wheels are still firmly on the road and actually facing forward and doing exactly where they should be doing (unless there is a mechanical issue). In fact, he thinks that the wheels themselves are actually weaving from side to side – even if only slightly – while initially, it is only the body or the bump-steer sensation.
- The driver tries to compensate for the roll by turning the steering when into the perceived movement of the wheels. This leads to the vehicle weaving left and right and eventually, the driver loses control.
- The situation is made worse if the driver applies the foot brake – especially if he does so forcefully at speed.
- Some drivers may even accelerate, which is not recommended! Using the exhaust brake is far more effective.
- The Ratel gets too close to the vehicle in front

and the driver suddenly feels that he must take “evasive action”

- The vehicle either leaves the road or hits the shoulder or verge, causing it to roll.
- In many cases the Ratel (thankfully) just falls over rather than actually rolls.
- The road surface, tyre conditions, wind and other factors increase the sensation - although not necessarily the actual movement of the hull, wheels or steering.

### ***FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO A ROLL OVER (In no particular order)***

- The Ratel suspension system of rigid axles and coil springs means that not all wheels move the same in any arc at any given time (excluding the actual “rolling of the wheels). This is due, amongst other factors, to road surfaces not being even (camber, rutting, uneven surfacing, etc.).
- There is no sub-frame so any effect is transmitted onto the hull.
- Worn shock absorbers (dampers) or unevenly worn dampers.
- Unevenly inflated tyres – especially under-inflated tyres.
- Damaged tyres.
- Incorrect tyres or different tyre types or sizes on different wheels.
- Incorrect wheel alignment.
- “Bent axles” – especially if only on one side. The axle itself does not bend but the U-shaped calliper on the ends is damaged so that the wheel is no longer square to the axle. The most common causes of this were driver abuse and driver inexperience, with a healthy dose of ill-discipline in some cases.



- Blowouts (seemingly very rare).

## ***HOW TO PREVENT ROLL-OVERS***

- Turret not properly secured (rare perhaps, but not totally uncommon).
- The heavier (Ratel 90) and higher (Ratel ZT-3) turrets could contribute to increasing the body roll effect – not cause it. Note that the position of the engine (left rear) was compensated for to a large extent by the turret being off-set to the right).
- The camber and condition of the road surface.
- Strong cross-wind and/or gusting wind.
- Oncoming traffic (that leads the driver to panic somewhat).
- An emergency situation when the driver must brake and/or take evasive action.
- Poor discipline, poor training and poor command and control.
- Proper and sound training with regular re-training of drivers.
- Drivers and crew commanders continually alert regarding road and traffic conditions.
- Excellent vehicle maintenance.
- Proper first-, last- and halt parades.
- Regular checking of tyres and tyre pressures.
- Regular technical inspections.
- Immediate reporting of malfunctions, problems, etc. – followed by technical inspection if necessary.
- Compliance with and adherence to Technical Bulletins.
- Don't speed!
- Adjusted speed limits according to prevailing or expected conditions and circumstances.
- Sound discipline and control.



# ***The 61 Mech Bn Gp Diaspora***

## ***Part 6***

### **LIGHT HORSE REGIMENT**

***Article by:  
Dr Anthony Turton***

The term “diaspora” originates from an ancient Greek word that signifies the act of scattering. This accurately describes the actions of people belonging to a diaspora, as they disperse from their native land to various locations around the world, while simultaneously sharing and promoting their culture along the way.

This is analogous to 61 Mech.

Just like the wind that awakens and brings rejuvenation as it moves along, the days of the 61 Mech Bn Gp were pioneering days filled with opportunities. For the national servicemen who were fortunate enough to go through the rigorous training of 61 Mech, a new challenge awaited. Once they completed their National Service, they were assigned to citizen force regiments. The Regiments force welcomed some of the most skilled and capable young soldiers into their ranks. These soldiers brought with them their expertise, top-notch training, and valuable combat experiences, adding value to the regiments they joined.





Among many others, the following 61 Mech members served with the Light Horse Regiment (Poll on 61 Mech Facebook Group on 13 July 2023 and research by the author).

Gerald Back – Protea

William Surmon – Excite, Linger, Harwet , Vuiswys

Neels van Heerden – Askari

Riaan Lambert – Protea

Patrick Quirk – Meebos

Ivan Churr – Sceptic

***During the Bush War, extensive use was made of both National Service and Citizen Force units to meet changing operational needs. One of the challenges confronting battlegroup commanders, was how to integrate these different elements into a coherent fighting force when needed. Each unit had its own specific culture, often informed by its history, which shaped its traditions and customs. This is certainly the case with the Light Horse Regiment (LHR).***

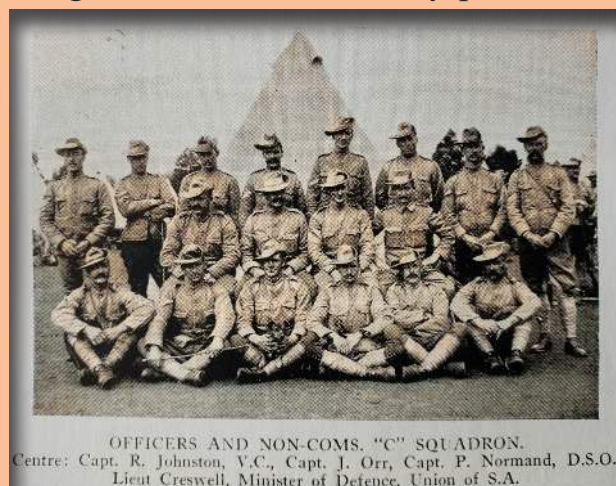
## **ANGLO BOER WAR**

What is known today as simply the Light Horse Regiment, traces its history back to the turbulent times prior to the Second Anglo Boer War. After the discovery of gold in 1886, the Transvaal Republic saw the rapid influx of foreigners and capital, intent on developing what was later to become the largest goldfield in the world. Transvaal was a Boer Republic, one of two Westphalian States in southern Africa. This is significant because the Treaty of Westphalia and Osnabruck, signed in 1648, ended a violent period of European history known as the Thirty Years War, when Catholic fought Protestant.

The Thirty Years War killed 8 million people, but it also created the legal concept of sovereignty that is central to modern day international law. The importance of this in the context of the history of the LHR, is that both the Transvaal and Orange Free state Republics were sovereign in terms of international law derived from the Treaty of Westphalia. From a political perspective this became relevant when the influx of foreigners into the Goldfields changed the population dynamics. The Transvaal citizens were Boers, without capital,

but with rights enshrined in the laws of sovereignty. The foreigners, now more than double the number of Boers, mostly British, agitated for political rights, but they were not citizens. Those with capital began to back what became known as the Uitlander movement. Cecil John Rhodes, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, got involved when he backed what was known as the Johannesburg Conspirators. The plan was for an uprising in Johannesburg, led by the Reform Committee of the Uitlander Movement, to seize an armoury in Pretoria, thereby justifying the intervention of an external force to “restore order”.

The significance of this clumsy political mess



OFFICERS AND NON-COMS. "C" SQUADRON.  
Centre: Capt. R. Johnston, V.C., Capt. J. Orr, Capt. P. Normand, D.S.O.,  
Lieut Creswell, Minister of Defence, Union of S.A.

lies in the fact that the Imperial Light Horse Regiment was founded in secret, by members of the Reform Committee, in a house in Saxonwold. This origin has given the regiment its unique characteristic, for it was designed to become an instrument of British imperialism.

The founders were Major Aubrey Woolls-Sampson, Major Walter Karri-Davis, Sir Percy Fitzpatrick (author of *Jock of the Bushveld*) and Captain Charles Mullins. Permission was sought from Queen Victoria to call it the Imperial Light Horse (ILH), but it was also known as the Reformers Regiment by the Transvaal Republic government, given its linkage to the Uitlanders Reform Committee.

From this initial founding, an important element of the culture of the unit can be found. Of the original 5,000 volunteers, the initial unit consisted of 444 officers and men after the selection process was complete. This made it an elite unit from the very beginning. Given that it was a volunteer cavalry unit, stable belts in regimental colour were worn as official dress.



*The traditional mess kit  
of the Regiment.  
Photo Credit  
Jackson's Warbooks*

The stable belt had a leather buckle that was fastened on the left hip of the wearer, unlike the stable belts of younger regiments that had a metal buckle in the front. The troops, being volunteers, were referred to as “the gentlemen of the Regiment”, and a strict discipline was imposed whereby the first to eat were the lowest in rank, and the last to eat was the RSM.

The title of “gentlemen” was bestowed by the Colonel who was about to take a swig of whiskey from his hip flask on the troop train, before their first deployment into battle, when the RSM intervened.

The Colonel offered his flask to the man next to him, and it passed around the entire contingent coming back untouched. On looking into the undiminished flask on its return, the Colonel raised it in salute to “the gentlemen of the regiment”. This unique cultural trait was strictly enforced during the Bush War, and ensured that all men were well fed, and none were privileged above any other.

The first battle for the ILH occurred at Elandslaagte, a railway station between Dundee and Ladysmith, on 21 October 1899. The Boer force, under the command of General Hannes Kock, included a foreign brigade known as the Boer Foreign Volunteers, captured the station severing the logistics line to Ladysmith. Two of the field guns in use by the Boers had been captured during the ill-fated Jameson Raid. The British force was under the overall command



*Imperial Light Horse Memorial on Platrand Ladysmith.  
Photo Credit Wikipedia.*



of Major General John French of which the ILH formed a dismounted infantry component. The Boer forces were engaged in a full cavalry charge in which sabers made contact with devastating effect. During this battle Colonel John James Scott-Chisholm of the ILH was killed in action. Two Victoria Crosses (VC's) were awarded after this action – to Captain Charles Herbert Mullins and Captain Robert Johnston.

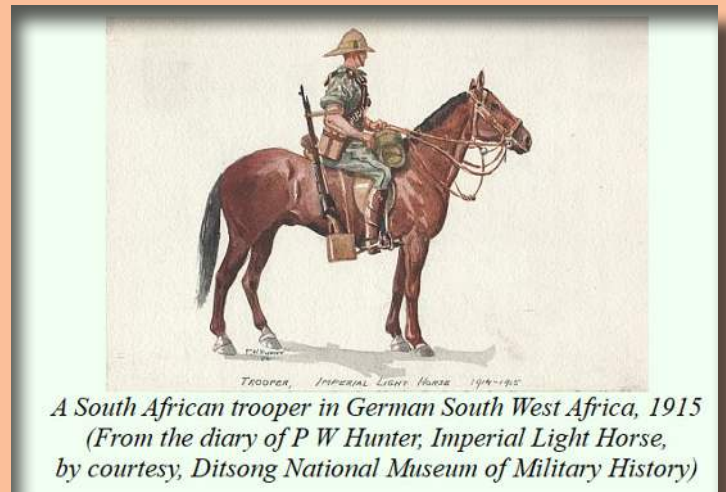
The ILH went on to try and relieve Ladysmith, then under siege by the Boer forces. A monument to the unit can be found at Wagon Hill where another VC was awarded to Trooper Herman Albrecht.

After Ladysmith the ILH was redeployed to become part of the Mafeking Relief Column under Colonel Mahon. Given the expansive nature of the Anglo Boer War, a second battalion of the ILH was raised under Major Duncan McKenzie. Both 1ILH and 2ILH fought in the Transvaal Republic and Orange Free State until the end of the war. A fourth VC was awarded to an “ops medic” Captain Thomas Joseph Cream for his gallantry in action at Tyger Kloof (near Bethlehem) in 1901.

After the Boer War, a squadron of the ILH served with the Transvaal Mounted Rifles during the Zulu Rebellion in 1906. When the gold mining industry started to boom after the Anglo Boer War, labour unrest started to grow. The First Rand Revolt occurred in 1913, fueled by discontentment towards the Native Land Act, and the ILH was deployed to assist the South African Police – something that was to again occur in the 1980's.

## WORLD WAR I

During WW1, the ILH was deployed into the South West African Campaign, where it was tasked to neutralize and German threat. After the war, the ILH was again mobilized during the Second Rand Revolt, where it supported the South African Police



## WORLD WAR II

During WWII, the ILH again constituted two separate battalions. The first battalion became part of the 1st South African Infantry Division deployed into the North Africa Campaign, where it fought against Rommel's Desert Army Africa in both the first and second Battles of El Alamein.

This brought the ILH into close contact with the Kimberley Regiment (KR), and a tradition started whereby officers and senior NCO's would wear a button from the sister regiment on their formal tunic. The second battalion became the 6th Armoured Car Regiment, later evolving into the 4th/6th Armoured Car Regiment as part of the South African Tank Corps.

After the defeat of Rommel, the ILH/KR was redeployed into Italy as part of the 12th South African Motorized Brigade. They saw action in Monte Casino, entering Florence on August 4th, 1944. The South African units were then placed under the command of the United States 5th Army for the attack on the Gothic Line. Heavy losses occurred when 25% of the unit was killed in action at Monte Salvore on 23 October 1944. Their last combat action in WWII was at Finale south of Venice.

After WWII the ILH became a Citizen Force unit equipped with Sherman tanks. When the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, there were efforts made to disband the ILH, fueled by political resentment toward the colonial heritage of the regiment. After a heated engagement, a compromise solution was reached that retained the regiment, but without the word “imperial” in the name. From that moment it was simply known as the Light Horse Regiment (LHR). The original motto Imperium et Libertas (Empire and Freedom) was changed to Patria et Libertas (Country and Freedom).



*Photo Credit  
William Surmon*





## BUSH WAR ERA

In 1975, responding to the rapidly changing national security situation triggered by the Portuguese coup d'état on 25 April 1974, which saw Angola and Mozambique being granted independence without viable governments in place, the unit was again split. 1LHR became part of 72 Motorized Brigade, and it was deployed into Operation Savannah. A book was written by Col Roy Jackson, OC of 1LHR, entitled *Hobby Horsemen: Operation Savannah*, which deals with that period of the unit's history. 2LHR became part of 81 Armoured Brigade, playing a role in the defensive force south of Ruacana deployed to blunt the Cuban 50th Division, should they decide to cross the border into South West Africa, after Operation Packer. This was known as Operation Desert Fox, a defense in depth should Operation Hilti/Excite fail to meet its objective. This came to a climax after the signing of the peace treaty at Ruacana on 22 August 1988, which ended the SADF involvement in the Angolan War. Both units had numerous deployments during the Bush War, often as part of 10 Armoured Car Squadron.

Internally, 2LHR was part of the first SADF deployment into the Township Wars in 1984, at Tembisa, Vosloorus and Katlehong, as part of Operations Blatjang and Adamsvy. Once again LHR reverted to its role of supporting the South African Police. Throughout its history, the LHR has been used as an instrument of the government of the day, first as an imperialist force, then a liberating expeditionary force, but ultimately as a peace-keeping force. Despite the highly politicized nature that characterized the broader milieu in which they operated, they always relied on a core set of ethics, supporting the duly elected government of the day. Their evolution has reflected the technology, tactics, and strategy of warfare. They have been remarkably adaptive in their role, so their DNA is deep and thus highly suited to their new mission in the SANDF, where they train soldiers in the Rooikat.

*Photo Credit  
William Surmon*



An ongoing problem facing commanders and planners, was the way that national servicemen and citizen force members could be integrated into battle groups. There are many examples of this, such as Operations Askari and Packer, in which the different cultures played a decisive role. LHR will continue to play an important role in bridging this divide and giving commanders the flexibility they need to successfully execute their mission, whatever it might be in the future.



*2017*



In total 31 battle honours have been awarded to 1 LHR and 2 LHR, 23 of which are currently displayed on the Regimental Colour:

South Africa 1899–1902

Defence of Ladysmith  
Relief of Ladysmith

Natal 1906

South West Africa 1914–1915  
Gibeon

Western Desert 1941–1943

Marsa Belafrit  
Bardia  
Gazala  
Alamein Defence  
Alamein Box  
El Alamein



Italy 1944–1945

Cassino  
Celleno  
Florence  
The Greve  
Gothic Line  
Monte Porro del Bagno  
Monte Vigese  
Monte Salvaro  
Po Valley







## **61 Mech Bn Gp**

### **WHAM**

*Die grootste gedeelte van die nasionale dienspligtiges wat aan die grens met Angola ontplooi was, het op een of ander wyse deelgeneem aan Kommunikasie Operasies (KomOps). In bree trekke was KomOps deel van die oorhoofse oorlogstrategie. Dit het neergekom op "WHAM" (Winning the hearts and minds of the population).*

*Die KomOps wat die soldaat op grondvlak beleef het was deel van 'n veel groter prentjie as die krale van die plaaslike bevolking te besoek, toffies uit te deel en vriendelik te wees. 61 Meg Bn Gp het jaarliks as deel van sy taak, ook sub-eenhede afgedeel na ander basisse as deel van Sektor 10 se KomOps plan.*

Wham was natuurlik ook onder die burgerlike bevolking van die Republiek bedryf: die familie, wergewers ens van die samelewing waaruit nasionale dienspligtiges gekom het. In hierdie artikel word Wham bespreek soos dit toegepas was onder die inheemse bevolking van die SWA gedeelte wat aan Angola gegrens het.





# *KomOps Algemeen*

Die daaglikse administrasie van SWA is bedryf deur die normale staatsdepartement soos Waterwese, Opvoeding, Elektrisiteit en verskeie ander. Met die geleidele ontwikkeling van die terrorisoorlog in Kaoko, Ovambo, Kavan- go en Kaprivi ens is militêre basisse ontwik- kel in en rondom die dorpe waar hierdie si- viele amptenare gewer en met hulle gesinne gewoon het. Soos Oshakati, Ondangwa, Ru- akana ens. Met die toename van getroude mi- litêre personeel het die sentra uitgebrei om ook hulle te huisves. Dit was opgevolg met 'n net- work van militêre basisse op insypelings roetes en om die bestaande verbindings roetes te be- veilig. Laasgenoemde ontwikkelings het die tradisionele lewenswyse van die plaaslike be- volking beïnvloed en moes kundig bestuur word om konflik van belange te omseil en uit die weg te ruim. So het die SAW 'n bydrae kon lewer met die voorsiening van gegradueerde dienspligtiges om die bestaande staatsdepartemente by te staan.

Maar waarskynlik was die grootste uitdaging daarin om die landelike bevolking se goedge- sindheid te hou op duisende vierkante meter se potensieële oorlogs terrein. Om te poog om nie deur hulle landerye te ry nie, of deur hulle hei- nings te breek nie, met hulle bees en bok kuddes te deel tenmidde van vyandelike spoor opvolg, gevegte, hindelae ens nie. Om dinge verder te bemoeilik was die plaaslike bevolking die fa- milies van die Swapo terroris. As teenvoeter het die SAW ook onder dieselfde gesinne ge- werf en het etniese battaljons die oorlog betree. (Bv. 101 Bn – Ovambo, 201 Bn – Kavango ens.). Dan was daar die SWA polisie en spesi- fik Koevoet wat hulle eie metodes gevolg het. Dit het die SAW en Koevoet in botsing gebring.

Ten spyte van die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag (SAW) wat aansienlike hulpbronne en man- nekrag belê het in hul poging om die onder- steuning van die Namibiese mense tydens die konflik te wen, is hul pogings belemmer deur 'n gebrek aan koördinasie en samewerking tus- sen die politieke, administratiewe, militêre en

polisie sektore.

Die SAW het probleme ondervind weens on- voldoende politieke rigting. Die Suid-Afri- kaanse regering het die Namibiese konflik as 'n kommunistiese bedreiging uitgebeeld om binnelandse steun te verkry. Hierdie benade- ring het ander faktore wat tot die konflik by- dra, geïgnoreer en pogings om die steun van die Namibiese bevolking te wen, verhinder. Daar- teenoor het SWAPO, die opponerende party, volkome vryheid van Suid-Afrikaanse inmeng- ing en heerskappy belowe, wat by die bevol- king aanklank gevind het. Uiteindelik was die hoofkwessie op die spel Suid-Afrika se teen- woordigheid in Namibië, en die regering het nie daarin geslaag om 'n alternatiewe oplos- sing te bied toe SWAPO hul voorwaardes ver- werp het nie.

Die onenigheid tussen die SAW en die admi- nistrasie was hoofsaaklik te wyte aan 'n ge- brek aan goed opgeleide staatsamptenare wat nie die belangrikheid daarvan waardeur of be- gryp het om openbare steun te verkry nie. Toe die SAW hierdie verantwoordelikhede oorge- neem het, het dit die administrasie se onvermoë om nodige dienste aan die bevolking te verskaf aan die lig gebring, en sodoende sy legiti- miteit as die beheerliggaam na die SAW se ver- trek verswak.

Die polisie en die SAW het verskillende idees gehad oor hoe om die samewerking van die bevolking te verkry. Die SAW het daarin ge- glo om mense te oorreed, terwyl Koevoet vrees en dwang gebruik het. Aangesien die bevol- king beide die polisie en die weermag as deel van dieselfde veiligheidsmagte gesien het, het Koevoet se optrede beïnvloed oor hoe hulle die Suid-Afrikaanse owerhede as geheel beskou het. Hierdie gebrek aan eenheid is nie opgelos nie en het tot aan die einde van die oorlog 'n probleem bly wees.

Die SAW het interne afdelings op verskeie vlakke gehad. Die hoofkwessies het verband gehou met die SAW se transformasie van 'n tradisionele militêre mag na 'n teeninsurgen-

siemag. Twee groot twispunte was die SAW se betrokkenheid by die Oorlog op die Tuisfront (Wham) en hoeveel belangrikheid aan Wham gegee moet word in vergelyking met militêre operasies. Veral in Ovamboland was daar 'n stryd om militêre beheer te vestig, wat gelei het tot aksies wat veroorsaak het dat die plaaslike bevolking uitgesluit of ontkoppel voel.

Die gebrek aan eenheid tussen die SAW, burgerlike owerhede en administrasie het 'n probleem langs die Angolese grens gestel. Dit was veral problematies in Ovamboland, waar verdeeldheid tussen die SAW en die polisie bestaan het, asook binne die SAW self. As ons die 1989-verkiesingsuitslae beskou as 'n weerspieëling van die bevolking se getrouheid, blyk

dit die idee te ondersteun dat pogings om militêre beheer (Wham) te vestig, die suksesvolste was in streke waar sodanige beheer ten volle gevestig was. Dit is egter opmerklik dat die Ovambo-mense die ondersteuningsbasis vir SWAPO was. Ten spyte hiervan het die gebrek aan eenheid situasies tot gevolg gehad waar optrede pogings ondermyn het om die bevolking te wen, wat moontlik bygedra het tot SWAPO se oorwinning by die stembus.





# 61 Meg Bn Gp se aandeel in KomOps operasies

Die primêre rol van 61 Meg Bn te Omuthiya was om te dien as 'n reaksiemag vir 'n konvensionele oorlog. As sulks het die eenheid aan verskeie operasies in Angola deelgeneem.

Hierdie operasies was egter nie van 'n jaar lange duur nie. Dit was gewoonlik operasies wat 'n paar weke geduur het. 61 Meg het oorskottyd gehad en ons is van tyd tot tyd na basisse vir KomOps-operasies ontplooi. Die meeste van hierdie ontplooiings het die ondertoon van 'n magsvertoon gehad, maar KomOps was altyd 'n integrale deel.

Die volgorde van gebeure vir 'n Sub-eenheid-ontplooiing het 'n vaste patroon gehad. Die Sub-eenheid het 'n waarskuwingsorder ontvang, wat die voorbereidingsfase aan die gang gesit het. Die 61 Meg voertuie was altyd gewapen vir enige konvensionele aanval, so dit het nie verander nie. Wat egter verander het, is dat ons ons Ratels en echelon-voertuie gelaai het met kommoditeite wat deur die KomOps-afdeling in Oshakati verskaf is. Dit was meestal snuis-terye soos toffies, koekies, tabak (die rou tipe wat gewild is by die plaaslike bevolking), sporttoerusting vir die skole en basiese medikasie vir die mees algemene kwale. Die Sub-eenheid het vooraf vertrek vir 'n inligtingssessie en om opdragte te ontvang vanaf die Hoofkwartier Sektor 10.

Die res van die konvooi het 'n dag of twee later onder bevel van die Sub-Eenheid tweede in bevel, gevolg. Onderweg het hulle 'n paar kommunikaturs en vertalers by 101 Bn by Ondangwa opgetel. Soms is kundig opgeleide KomOps-personeel by Miershoop opgetel. En dan het die mag in 'n gebied inbeweeg en die werk begin doen. Alhoewel dit baie indrukwekkend was, was die Ratel-voertuig nogal moeilik om deur die statte, omring deur houtpaalheinings en die mahango-lande deur ander heiningsmetodes,

te beweeg sonder om skade te berokken.

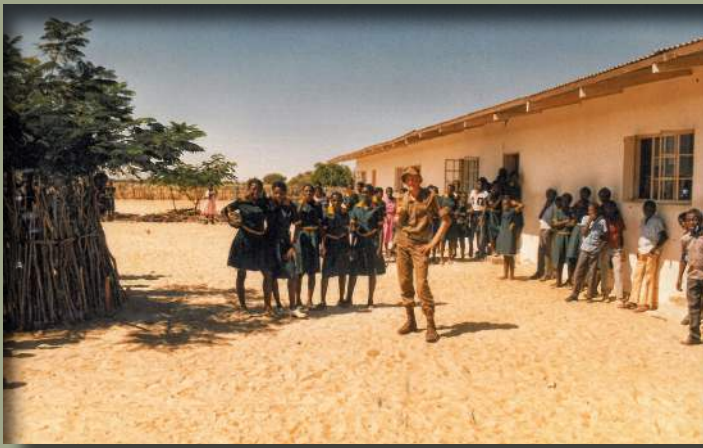
Die beste taktiek was om 'n peloton verantwoordelik te maak vir 'n groot gebied waar die pelotonbevelvoerder se Ratel sentraal geplaas was. Die drie seksies sou dan elkeen 'n verantwoordelike gebied met 'n spesifieke taak kry. Ver genoeg van mekaar om die area te dek maar naby genoeg om binne minute die peloton bymekaar te kry.

Op seksievlak was die drill met die Ratel staties as senterpunt en die seksie te voet verdeel was in twee spanne binne ondersteunings afstand van mekaar. Elkeen van hierdie spanne het 'n mediese ordenans gehad.

Dit het gedurende daglig ure gebeur. Laatmiddag het die afdelings onttrek om by die pelotonbevelvoerder se Ratel aan te sluit en uiteindelik na die tydelike basis van die Sub-eenheid. Dit sou vir ongeveer drie dae aanhou met die pelotons wat 'n gebied van etlike vierkante kilometer dek, en dan na 'n nuwe gebied skuif.

Die rol van die kommunikaturs van 101 Bn was om spesifieke temas aan die bevolking oor te dra. Die tolke was van 'n laer rang en hul uitsluitlike doel was om die vrae en antwoorde tussen die seksiebevelvoerder en die kraalbewoners te vertaal.

Soms het 'n mediese dokter by die Sub-eenheds hoofkartier vanuit sy ambulans 'n kliniekdiens verrig.





### ***Johan Cronje***

In Owambo het die SAW 'n ploeg-en-plant skema gehad. Die landerye is ontboom, geploeg en geplant, baie meer as wat nodig was vir daardie kraal om mee te oorleef, die surplus sou verkoop word om n ekstrasjje te verdien. Maar dit het nie gewerk nie, vrouens het net die nodige geskoffel, vir eie gebruik en die mans het gesit en mahango bier drink, en kyk hoe vrouens werk.

### ***Dean Verster***

Comops unit in Sector 10 was based at Miershoop base south of Okatope. The Comops Unit was made up of members trained at SA Intelligence School , Kimberley ( later based in Potch) . The Comops (Own Forces) unit was based at Oshakati. They arranged concerts , movies , sports equipment , etc for the troops. Comops wasn't just used to improve relations with the PB's, but formed a broader part of intelligence gathering through having those relationships with the PB's .

### ***Robert Barrie***

Terwyl dit wat deur Komops gedoen was reg was, twyfel ek of die PB's dit op dieselfde wyse aanvaar het. Die mate van invloed is sekerlik nie gereflekteer deur die finale uitkoms nie. Ek glo dat die teenstand teen ons was net te groot en ons was waarskynlik nie geglo nie. Dit is eerder 'n vraag wie hulle geglo het en op die einde was dit Swapo.

### ***Hannes Roodt***

Ons het redelik baie komops gedoen. Skole besoek, Bybels uitgedeel, selfs die PB's selfverdediging geleer en ook 'n keer of wat sokker gespeel teen die skoolseuns. Ek dink ons bedoeling was goed en rein. Ek weet egter nie hoe het die PB's dit gesien en beleef nie. Daar was maar altyd die effense onrustigheid wie is vriend en wie is vyand wat voor jou staan.

Foto deur Hannes Roodt





